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News Release

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Theta-Burst Stimulation Study for Treatment of PTSD Published

PROVIDENCE — Researchers at the Providence VA Medical Center published a study Monday, June 24, finding that theta-burst stimulation may be a promising new treatment for posttraumatic stress disorder, commonly known as PTSD.

The article, “Theta-Burst Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder,” was published in the American Journal of Psychiatry, summarizing a controlled study of 50 Veterans with PTSD. Transcranial magnetic stimulation has previously shown promise as a treatment for PTSD, and intermittent theta-burst stimulation, or iTBS, is a new, more rapid process that has been shown to be effective in treating depression.

Outcomes measured in the study included comparing changes in PTSD symptoms, depression, and social and occupational function in participants, compared with a control group who only received simulated treatment. The team was also able to identify participants most likely to improve with iTBS using functional magnetic resonance imaging, also known as MRI.

“Our results indicate that iTBS appears to be a promising new treatment for PTSD, a condition more common among Veterans than in the general population,” said lead researcher Dr. Noah S. Philip, director of Psychiatric Neuromodulation at the Providence VA Medical Center, and Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Human Behavior at the Alpert Medical School of Brown University. “Further investigation is needed, to develop the optimal treatment course and duration.”

The study was supported by U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs grants, and the VA Rehabilitation Research and Development Service’s Center for Neurorestoration and Neurotechnology at the Providence VA Medical Center. The article can be found online at <https://ajp.psychiatryonline.org/doi/full/10.1176/appi.ajp.2019.18101160>.

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Dr. Noah S. Philip, director of Psychiatric Neuromodulation at the Providence VA Medical Center, and Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Human Behavior at the Alpert Medical School of Brown University, demonstrates theta burst transcranial magnetic stimulation with Emily Aiken, a research assistant at the Providence VAMC, Oct. 2, 2017. (Providence VA Medical Center photo by Tori Larson)

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